

## **Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project Summary of Fall 2003 Public Meetings – September 30<sup>th</sup>, October 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>**

The Alaskan Way Viaduct and Seawall Replacement Project hosted three public meetings on September 30<sup>th</sup>, October 1<sup>st</sup>, and October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2003. The three meetings were held throughout the project corridor, one each in the north, central, and south areas. The northern corridor meeting was held at BF Day Elementary in Fremont; the central corridor meeting at Plymouth Congregational Church in downtown Seattle; and the southern corridor meeting at Lafayette Elementary School in West Seattle. Forty-seven citizens attended the Fremont meeting, 77 people attended the Downtown meeting, and 71 attended the West Seattle meeting. Each meeting lasted for approximately three hours.

At each meeting, a presentation on the project was given by team members who invited questions and discussion from the public. Before and after the presentation, attendees had the opportunity to view project information and speak with project team members in an open house format. A handout detailing cost, traffic, and construction duration information was available, along with a general project fact sheet and a seawall fact sheet. In addition to the handouts, comment forms were available. Additional meeting materials included 3'x4' display boards, sign in sheets, directional signs, Title VI forms, power point presentation, snacks and refreshments.

Comments received at all three meetings are detailed below in the overall comment summary. A detailed description of comments from each meeting also appears below.

### **Overall Summary of Comments**

The following is an overall summary of comments received at all three public meetings. A total of seventy-five comment forms were received. There is statistical data for some categories, as well as a summary of the answers given for other questions. This section also describes the methods that were used to quantify comments. A more detailed comment analysis for each meeting follows this summary.

#### **1) Do you use the viaduct to access or bypass downtown?**

- 36% - Bypass
- 29% - Both Bypass and Access
- 20% - Access
- 15% - Do not use viaduct

These percentages are for responses received at all three meetings. The numbers for each individual meeting vary from these percentages. A majority of people at the Fremont and West Seattle meetings answered bypass or both, while at the downtown meeting people answered bypass or access with the answer “both” only receiving a 4% response.

#### **2) How do you use the central waterfront?**

- 69% - Tourism/Take Visitors
- 63% - Ferries

- 61% - Shopping/Dining
- 49% - Recreation
- 41% - Travel/Recreation
- 24% - Business/Work
- 12% - Other
- 1% - Freight

Note: The preceding numbers are independent of each other. Individuals were given the option to check all boxes that applied to their use of the central waterfront; therefore each percentage is calculated as the number of times each box was checked over the total number of contact forms. Responses under “other” included: avoid due to congestion, views, stadium access, walking, meetings, and do not use.

The above percentages are from all three public meetings. The trends shown in the above percentages are similarly reflected in the percentages from each individual meeting. Tourism/Take Visitors, Ferries, and Shopping/Dining were the most popular choices at each meeting.

### **3) What three things about the project are most important to you?**

Examples were given (e.g. cost, urban design, maintaining capacity, etc), but there were no specific criteria for answers. Common responses included cost, maintaining views, public safety, maintaining capacity, and urban design.

#### **4a) Which alternatives best serve your priorities?**

- 59% - Tunnel
- 27% - Bypass Tunnel
- 21% - Rebuild
- 20% - Aerial
- 12% - Surface

These numbers were calculated from the entire group of comment forms. Individuals were given the option of choosing multiple alternatives. Bypass Tunnel and Aerial were not typically chosen alone without an accompanying alternative. They were most often selected when Tunnel and Rebuild, respectively, were selected as well.

Results varied at each individual meeting. The Tunnel Alternative received the greatest percentage at each meeting. In the north and the central the Bypass Tunnel Alternative was the second most popular choice, while the Rebuild and Aerial Alternatives followed the Tunnel in the south.

#### **4b) Why?**

Individuals were asked to explain why they chose the alternatives they did. In general people’s explanations reflected what they felt was most important about the project.

People who chose Rebuild and/or Aerial said that they enjoy the views from the viaduct. People who chose Tunnel and/or Bypass Tunnel cited the urban design possibilities and the long-term benefits to Seattle. People who chose Surface said they chose this alternative because the cost was lower and some urban design concepts were still retained.

#### **5) What issues would you like addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?**

People were given the opportunity to emphasize areas they would like to see addressed in the DEIS. Comments centered on the following topics: noise, air quality, alternate forms of transportation, and waterfront development.

#### **6) If the viaduct were to close, how would your travel route or mode of transportation change?**

General themes throughout the comment forms were the use of I-5 and downtown streets (1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues), as well as increased use of transit as available.

#### **7) Additional Comments**

Individuals were given the opportunity to submit additional comments at the end of each form. Comments from each meeting are listed below.

#### **8) Presentation Comments**

During the presentation by the project team the audience was given the chance to ask questions and make comments. These questions and comments were recorded and appear below under each individual meeting.

#### **September 30, 2003 – BF Day Elementary, 5:00pm – 8:00pm**

##### **1) Do you use the viaduct to access or bypass downtown?**

- 45% - Bypass
- 24% - Both
- 19% - Do not use
- 14% - Access

##### **2) How do you use the central waterfront?**

- 71% - Tourism/Take Visitors
- 57% - Ferries
- 52% - Shopping/Dinning
- 48% - Recreation
- 24% - Travel Route
- 10% - Other
- 5% - Business/Work
- 0% - Freight

### **3) What three things about the project are most important to you?**

- Cost
- Urban design
- Transit interface options
- Maintaining easy access to airport and Burien
- Opinions of people who use this roadway be seriously considered
- Traffic impacts
- Maintain/enhance pedestrian to the waterfront
- Public and earthquake safety
- Bypassing downtown
- Aesthetics
- Keep the viaduct
- Construction duration
- Noise control
- Emphasis on transit (fewer single occupancy vehicles)
- Maintaining views from the viaduct

### **4a) Which alternatives best serve your priorities?**

- 33% - Tunnel
- 33% - Bypass Tunnel
- 29% - Rebuild
- 14% - Aerial
- 5% - Surface

### **4b) Why?**

People who chose the Rebuild or Aerial Alternative said both alternatives preserve the view while driving. People also stated that they felt these two structures move traffic through the corridor better.

People who chose the Tunnel or Bypass Tunnel alternatives explained that they liked having the traffic underground to open up the waterfront. Also, they said that these alternatives would allow a better connection between downtown and the waterfront; and create an area that was more aesthetically pleasing and open for development.

One person chose the Surface Alternative. They said, “Opens up the waterfront and costs less than the tunnel.”

### **5) What issues would you like addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?**

- Parking on the waterfront during construction
- Environmental impacts – noise, air quality, marine life
- Transit improvement – streetcar, light rail, monorail, and bus
- An “Embarcadero” option

- Improved visual quality of the waterfront
- Future development of the waterfront

**6) If the viaduct were to close, how would your travel route or mode of transportation change?**

People explained that they would use I-5, downtown surface streets, and transit if the viaduct were to close. Also expressed was the hope that an increase in transit would be available if such a situation were to occur.

**7) Additional Comments:**

These comments were chosen as a representation of the type of additional comments that appeared in the forms. Not every comment is listed here.

- “Please fix it before I get killed on my way to work. I'd be willing to pay a toll if I still had a view, but not for a tunnel. (Yes its ugly, but I love the view) I am skeptical about real estate special interests pushing tunnel option for property values - not a good use of taxpayers money.”
- “Let's follow Vancouver and San Francisco's example. Get the freeway out of the heart of the city! Save your pennies for I-5 and 520 - we're going to need them. There is simply not enough regional funding to build all these more expensive options, and there is zero guarantee the RTID package will pass. And the Port should definitely be contributing a lot to this project.”
- “If you are closing the viaduct please have an efficient plan to divert traffic.”
- “P.R. to newspaper and other local media seem to imply that the viaduct will be replaced with tunnel; it would appear that tunnel amenities are only issues remaining to be discussed. I hope this is not so.”

**8) Presentation Comments/Questions:**

- If the earthquake in 2001 lasted 15 seconds longer and the seawall failed, would we have lost Alaskan Way?
- What plans are you making for a new structure in case of a tsunami?
- Why is the tunnel so deep?
- What kind of escape route is there out of the tunnel in case of a fire or accident?
- What happens to the parking under the viaduct?
- What size earthquake will hurt a tunnel?
- What are the noise levels under the surface alternative?
- Is the surface alternative louder than the aerial?
- Are there possible treatments for reducing the noise on the upper level of the viaduct?
- How closely linked are the tunnel and bypass tunnel alternatives?
- Is I-5 going to be redone in conjunction with this project?
- Are you looking to improve 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenues and other arterials under the surface alternative?

- With all the increase in north King and south Snohomish counties, you are not assuming any increase in autos and only transit?
- I am disappointed that tolling this facility is off the table as a TDM measure.
- Have you looked at tax revenue increases for each alternative?
- What timing and funding impact would the viaduct have if it failed tomorrow in an earthquake?
- What other projects are competing for larger amounts of funding?
- How much money is in RTID for this project?
- Who decides the selection?
- Is there any voter impact?
- Is the cruise ship operation a meaningful source of revenue?
- This project is spinning the information so badly. The viaduct is our legacy and you want to take it down and spend the time we could be using it to build something we don't need. You could retrofit the current structure to last many more years.

**October 1, 2003 – Plymouth Congregational Church, 4:30 pm – 7:30 pm**

**1) Do you use the viaduct to access or bypass downtown?**

- 48% - Bypass
- 26% - Access
- 22% - Do not use
- 4% - Both

**2) How do you use the central waterfront?**

- 78% - Shopping/Dinning
- 74% - Tourism/Take Visitors
- 65% - Ferries
- 57% - Recreation
- 52% - Travel Route
- 30% - Business/Work
- 22% - Other
- 0% - Freight

**3) What three things about the project are most important to you?**

- Urban design
- Cost
- Use/development of waterfront
- Accommodating future traffic needs
- Reduce noise
- Make it less ugly
- Maintain capacity
- Efficient traffic movement bypassing downtown
- Environment
- Tourism

- Safety – structural soundness
- Pedestrian access to the waterfront
- Reducing car capacity downtown
- Transit/bicycle improvements
- Preserving/upgrading the seawall
- Open space

**4a) Which alternatives best serve your priorities?**

- 83% - Tunnel
- 39% - Bypass Tunnel
- 13% - Surface
- 9% - Aerial
- 0% - Rebuild

**4b) Why?**

People chose the Aerial Alternative because they said they enjoy the views while driving on the viaduct and because the cost is less than the tunnel.

People chose the Tunnel and Bypass Tunnel alternatives because they would reconnect the waterfront to downtown, increase the visual quality of the waterfront, take traffic away from downtown streets, and allow for development along the waterfront. People also commented on the long-term aspect of the project and how the tunnel alternatives would benefit the city the most in the future. “The benefits would be worth the costs,” stated one commenter.

People said they chose the Surface Alternative because the cost is the least and it would still provide an opportunity to redevelop the waterfront and reconnect it to downtown. One person explained their choice saying that Seattle needs to reduce its capacity for cars.

**5) What issues would you like addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?**

- Examination of long-term true costs including value if land use restored to the city
- Runoff and how it will be handled
- Noise reduction
- Urban design for pedestrians
- Bicycle access
- Mass transit expansion and options
- Impact on sea life
- How traffic will be handled during construction
- How increased costs will be handled under unforeseen circumstances
- Air pollution
- Future impacts – build something that will withstand impacts of weather and earthquakes and will also be visually pleasing in the future.
- Tourism impact in downtown with an improved waterfront
- Public safety – differences between each alternative

**6) If the viaduct were to close, how would your travel route or mode of transportation change?**

Many comments revealed that travel routes would not change significantly for some because they live in downtown and do not use the viaduct often. Those who do use the viaduct indicated their alternate travel routes would be I-5 and surface streets (1<sup>st</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, Alaskan Way, etc.). If the viaduct were to close, travel times would increase significantly with these alternate routes. Also mentioned was the increased use in transit if the viaduct were to close.

**7) Additional Comments:**

These comments were chosen as a representation of the type of comments that appeared in the forms. Not every comment is listed here.

- “Surface alternative is even worse than aerial because of impact on downtown, slowness of travel impeded by intersections. Don't even consider eliminating east west crossing.”
- “I think it is important to one, keep the truck and industrial traffic off the surface streets and put them in the tunnel, two, provide as many on and off ramps as possible, three, leave out ten foot shoulder requirements, four, give back the waterfront to Seattle for its enjoyment.”
- “Please include urban design, waterfalls, trees, etc in waterfront design to make Seattle waterfront a lovely space for the next 100 years.”
- “We should stay above ground to the South - tunnel thru downtown and not fix Mercer mess or any other not necessary project add-on. But Do The Core (Downtown) Section Properly - TUNNEL! The resurgent economic growth will be the cities legacy.”
- “I work next to the viaduct. If it went underground 8 hours a day would be relieved of constant noise, dirt and odors.”
- “I think the priority should be to strengthen the seawall. Work on the viaduct can continue to be discussed while this is happening.”

**8) Presentation Comments/Questions:**

- Is the south end option something that fits with all the alternatives?
- What comparable grades exist today that will be like what you are proposing?
- Is there any access to the waterfront that is quick?
- In the surface option, is it taken into account that people will use different modes of transportation?
- How does Denny work under the new Mercer options?
- What is Mercer and Broad Streets' relationship to the viaduct?
- What would it take if you were to put up the replacement and not have to worry about maintaining traffic – would it lower the cost and time of construction?
- Do the future traffic numbers account for an increase in alternative forms of transportation?
- In the ‘What is the Overall Effect on Traffic’ slide, are all these all future trips to downtown in cars?



- In the ‘Growth in Person Trips’ slide, what assumptions have you made on transit funding since you triple the amount needed?
- Do you think the increase in transit is a reasonable assumption?
- If people do not take transit or obey your models, do the travel time increase?
- Will travel times be published for other modes of transportation like bikes? (not until a preferred plan is chosen)
- Every building has hundreds of spots, so if parking spots do not freeze, your capacity is not going to.
- Do you include HOV lanes in your plans?
- Is the cost of the seawall included in your figures?
- Do you ever segregate the seawall from the transportation side?
- Is there a maintenance cost for each alternative and is tolling a way to pay for that?

**October 2, 2003 – Lafayette Elementary School, 5:00 to 8:00 p.m**

**1) Do you use the viaduct to access or bypass downtown?**

- 52% - Both
- 23% - Bypass
- 19% - Access
- 6% - Do not use

**2) How do you use the central waterfront?**

- 68% - Tourism/Take Visitors
- 61% - Ferries
- 55% - Shopping/Dinning
- 45% - Recreation
- 45% - Travel Route
- 32% - Business/Work
- 7% - Other
- 3% - Freight

**3) What three things about the project are most important to you?**

- Cost
- Urban design
- Maintaining capacity
- Tunnel with total shutdown from the Battery Street tunnel south
- Safety and longevity
- Travel time and traffic flow
- Environmental sustainability
- Matching “who benefits” with “who pays” – keeping in mind the full range of benefits and that some benefits occur for non-drivers as well
- Keeping the usage open during construction
- Additional exits into the city
- Avoid tunnel/stays above ground
- No obstructions of view or access to the waterfront

- Open space and park areas
- Congestion during construction
- Construction duration
- Revitalization/economic development
- A gathering place for people
- Retain the primary, historical purpose of bypassing downtown
- Keep a bike trail

**4a) Which alternatives best serve your priorities?**

- 58% - Tunnel
- 32% - Rebuild
- 32% - Aerial
- 16% - Surface
- 13% - Bypass Tunnel

**4b) Why?**

People who chose the Rebuild and/or Aerial alternatives cited the following reasons: the structure works fine now and the views while driving are great, the cost is less than the tunnel, preserves parking below the viaduct, maintains traffic flow during construction, and people do not want to be stuck in a tunnel during heavy traffic times.

People who chose the Tunnel and/or Bypass Tunnel alternatives cited the following reasons: opens up the waterfront and allows for development and connection to downtown, hides the highway from downtown and creates more open space, would improve Seattle now and have benefits well into the future, and removes barrier between downtown and the waterfront.

People who chose the Surface Alternative cited the ability to open up the waterfront and connect it to downtown while keeping the project cost down as the main reason for their choice.

**5) What issues would you like addressed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?**

- Noise reduction
- Visual quality of the structure and/or the waterfront
- Alternatives that relocate capacity
- Well planned alternate routes during construction so people in West Seattle are not stranded
- Separation of seawall and viaduct costs
- Cost of a retrofit
- What the cost will be for the public and how it will be collected
- Congestion and resultant air pollution during construction
- Pedestrian and bicycle impacts
- Traffic analysis
- Parking during and after construction
- Traffic congestion if Seneca and Columbia ramps are removed
- Tunnel lighting and emergency access within the tunnel

- Handicap access for emergency escapes
- Sustainability – how will it mitigate negative impacts on the environment

**6) If the viaduct were to close, how would your travel route or mode of transportation change?**

People explained that they would find alternate routes (I-5, surface streets through downtown). However there was a much larger sentiment of inconvenience in West Seattle. Some people stated:

- “I would probably close my Seattle office and move out, most of my employees are outside of Seattle anyway.”
- “It would take me hours to do my job. I use my car and travel outside of West Seattle daily.”
- “I’d have to move or change jobs. I live in West Seattle and work in Fremont.”
- “Based on earthquake experience I would probably sell my West Seattle house and move out of Puget Sound.”

**7) Additional Comments:**

These comments were chosen as a representation of the type of comments that appeared in the forms. Not every comment is listed here.

- “Please don’t build a tunnel. Think about the future generations. Think about beauty.”
- “How about putting light rail or the monorail on the waterfront to take some of the capacity? There must be buses or spurs that could get commuters up the hill two blocks (don’t have to go all the way to 3rd Ave).”
- “I reiterate that the view from the common worker using the viaduct frequently will be much better served by an above ground road. Since traffic is growing exponentially, a sound view highway is psychologically healthier than a tunnel. The only people who gain from a tunnel are the apartment owners who already live downtown and can get above the viaduct much more easily.”
- “Make a plan to mitigate disruption during construction. West Seattle residents need to be able to get to a hospital in emergencies.”
- “Re: ramp issues into downtown - people should be taking transit into downtown. If you have to do an aerial - please make sure the shoulders are adequate to accommodate emergency vehicles.”
- “I would be better off taking my chances on the viaduct as-is versus the surface or tunnel options.”
- “Why has the cost changed so much? If Pier 46 goes to potential development does the taxpayer have less Port taxes to pay?”

**Presentation Comments:**

- Who came up with the ‘if the Nisqually earthquake had lasted 10 seconds longer the seawall and viaduct could have failed’ and ‘1 in 20 chance...’ statistics?

- Are the ramps to/from downtown gone in all alternatives?
- Where does traffic go during construction?
- What is the cost of the seawall?
- Does the cost of each alternative include the cost of the seawall?
- Is the seawall reconstruction the same in each alternative?
- Does Bypass Tunnel maintain the same capacity as today?
- What improvements are you making to the Battery Street Tunnel? Is there a structural change?
- What is the advantage of the Surface Alternative?
- Are the ramps at Royal Brougham gone in the south options?
- How did you come up with the amount of vehicles using Alaskan Way and SR 99 figures?
- Is the bike route on E. Marginal the same in each alternative?
- How much of the Coast Guard's property do you take?
- What is the Port going to use T46 for?
- Is Washington State Ferries taking over Pier 48?
- Why wouldn't the Ferries pay for changes made to improve holding versus this project? I don't understand why this project assumes this cost. How much money is included to pay for that?
- Have you made accommodations for an expanded Colman Dock? (yes)
- Why can't the Ferries build into the water?
- This is supposedly one of the best deep harbors in the world and the idea of putting in condos at T-46 is awful.
- Have you put a value on the 110,000 vehicles using the facility a day to come up with an estimate on how much a new facility is worth?
- What percentage of cost would you have if you rerouted traffic?
- Why are you only thinking about a tunnel? I do not like tunnels.
- Do the costs contain all the south/north options?
- Why haven't you been out to speak to people on the east side of I-5?
- How do you plan on preparing for the increase in transit needed to maintain traffic in 2030?
- What is the Corps' interest in the project? Is the City prepared to give control over to the Corps? The Corps is not a grant organization; they take control when they get involved.
- Have you tried to justify this project by other existing highway systems?
- Where does the money come from for the things you are doing now? You're using it up instead of saving it for the project. Is there a publication that contains how this money is being spent?
- Have you done a study of closing the facility from the Battery Street Tunnel to King St.? After the earthquake, getting out of W. Seattle was awful.
- Is the temporary structure a serious option?
- Have you assessed how long it will take to get through the corridor during construction? This information is important to some neighborhoods, more than others, when deciding which alternative is best.
- Who decides which alternative will be chosen?

- What are the criteria based on?
- Is there a referendum going to the public for a vote?
- In comparing this to New York City, we have to decide between a Holland/Lincoln Tunnel or a Riverside Drive.
- Is the Rebuild Alternative the simplest?
- Is the proposed monorail impacting this project?